Testimony

The Terrorist Diaspora

After the Fall of the Caliphate

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Before the Committee on Homeland Security
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Thank you Chairman Gallagher, Ranking Member Watson Coleman, and distinguished members of the task force for inviting me to testify today. My testimony will address three fundamental issues. First, what is the terrorist diaspora? Second, what are the implications of this diaspora, or more precisely, what is the threat posed by returning foreign terrorist fighters? Third, what can the United States do to mitigate the threat posed by foreign fighters fleeing the battlefield in Iraq and Syria?

In September 2016, referring to the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), then–Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Director James Comey acknowledged "the so-called caliphate will be crushed," although he subsequently warned that its fighters "will not all die on the battlefield in Syria and Iraq" and the result "will be a terrorist diaspora sometime in the next two to five years like we've never seen before."[3] The caliphate is indeed being crushed, but the second- and third-order effects of its deterioration could send shockwaves throughout the West, as surviving foreign fighters attempt to wreak havoc elsewhere.

ISIS is hemorrhaging territory, its financing continues to be degraded, and popular support for the group has diminished significantly.[4] As operations against ISIS in Mosul conclude and

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[2] The RAND Corporation is a research organization that develops solutions to public policy challenges to help make communities throughout the world safer and more secure, healthier and more prosperous. RAND is nonprofit, nonpartisan, and committed to the public interest.

[3] Josh Gerstein and Jennifer Scholtes, "Comey Warns of Post-ISIL Terrorist 'Diaspora,'" *Politico,* September 27, 2016.

[4] Seth G. Jones, James Dobbins, Daniel Byman, Christopher S. Chivvis, Ben Connable, Jeffrey Martini, Eric Robinson, and Nathan Chandler, *Rolling Back the Islamic State,* Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, RR-1912, 2017, See also David Francis, "Islamic State Revenues Down 80 Percent from 2015," *Foreign Policy*, June 29, 2017.

the offensive against the ISIS capital in Raqqa gains momentum, the terrorist group has begun shifting men and materiel to its stronghold in Deir Ezzor and Mayadeen, foreshadowing a potentially bloody conflict closer to the Iraqi and Jordanian borders.

For months, ISIS fighters have been reinfiltrating towns and villages throughout the Euphrates River Valley that were thought to have been cleared.[5] Furthermore, it is likely that hundreds of militants, including many foreign fighters, have already scattered elsewhere and are preparing to continue waging jihad in another theater.

What Is the Terrorist Diaspora?

The term *diaspora,* in its most fundamental sense, refers to a national, cultural, or religious group living in a foreign land. Historically, many diasporas have left their mark on overseas conflicts by providing both active and passive support—from Irish-Americans in the United States to Sri Lankan Tamils living in Canada.[6] But the term "terrorist diaspora," as currently used, more accurately describes foreign fighters who traveled from more than 80 different countries to fight with militant groups in Iraq and Syria and who have moved on or soon will move on to other countries. While some of these fighters might go on to provide passive support to Salafi-jihadist insurgencies,[7] the part of the "terrorist diaspora" we are most concerned about are the foreign fighters who will move on from Syria and Iraq to participate in other civil wars or organize terrorist cells.

An unprecedented number of fighters joined the battle in Iraq and Syria—many more than the *mujahideen* guerillas who fought in the Soviet-Afghan conflict during the 1980s. Jihadist expert Thomas Hegghammer estimated the number of foreign fighters in Afghanistan during the anti-Soviet conflict at 5,000 to 20,000,[8] while scholars such as Edwin Bakker and Mark Singleton have estimated that around 30,000 foreign fighters have fought in Iraq and Syria.[9]

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[5] Loveday Morris, "Away From Iraq's Front Lines, the Islamic State is Creeping Back In," *Washington Post*, February 22, 2017.

[6] Daniel Byman, Peter Chalk, Bruce Hoffman, William Rosenau, and David Brannan, *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements,* Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MR-1405-OTI, 2001.

[7] Salafi characterizes an adherent of an ideological strain in Sunni Islam that seeks to emulate, as purer, the thinking and practices of Muhammad and the earliest generations of Muslims. Jihadists believe that violent struggle against non-Muslims and Muslims they judge as apostate is an important religious duty (Benjamin W. Bahney, Howard J. Shatz, Carroll Ganier, Renny McPherson, Barbara Sude, with Sara Beth Elson, and Ghassan Schbley, *An Economic Analysis of the Financial Records of al-Qa'ida in Iraq*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-1026-OSD, 2010.

[8] Thomas Hegghammer, "The Rise of Muslim Foreign Fighters," *International Security*, Vol. 35, No. 3, Winter 2010/2011, pp. 53–94.

[9] Edwin Bakker and Mark Singleton, "Foreign Fighters in the Syria and Iraq Conflict: Statistics and Characteristics of a Rapidly Growing Phenomenon," in Andrea de Guttry, Francesca Capone, and Christophe Paulussen, eds., *Foreign Fighters Under International Law and Beyond*, The Hague: TMC Asser Press, 2016. Importantly, this number likely does not include the foreign fighters in Syria fighting *against* the Islamic State and al-Qa'ida–linked groups like Jabhat al-Nusra (since rebranded Jabhat Fateh al-Sham). Indeed, significant numbers of Afghan and Pakistani Shia are also fighting alongside Hezbollah and other pro-Assad elements and could very well be a problem for the United States in future conflicts, especially as tensions continue to grow with Iran.

Thus, the wave of fighters who could emerge from the conflict is especially foreboding. Foreign fighters from the Afghan conflict went on to form the core of al-Qaida and fight in the internecine conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Algeria, and Chechnya during the 1990s.[10] The fighters emerging from this conflict seek to leave a similar legacy.

Where do these foreign fighters come from? The Soufan Group estimates that approximately 6,000 are from the West; of these, roughly 150 are from the United States and 5,000 are from Western Europe. Nearly three-quarters of Western European fighters hail from just four countries: France (1,800), the United Kingdom (760), Germany (760), and Belgium (470).[11]

The foreign fighter phenomenon is likely to worsen in the future as the caliphate continues to deteriorate. This phenomenon is not new. Over the past 200 years, foreign fighters have appeared in more than a quarter of all civil wars.[12] However, this new generation of jihadists has improved communication, easier transportation, and diversified sources of information and money, making even small cadres of experienced fighters a dangerous force. These fighters can now engage in foreign civil wars and insurgencies—and export their expertise back to their home countries or to places they have newly immigrated. In addition, encrypted communications and the ubiquity of social media mean that even after the caliphate disappears, the ideology of Salafi-jihadism will persist online as a virtual caliphate, offering aspiring jihadists hope that the next major battle is all but inevitable and continuing to exhort its followers to conduct violence wherever they are.

What Is the Threat Posed By Foreign Terrorist Fighters?

Accordingly, what might ISIS's remaining foreign fighters choose to do next? When a conflict winds down, either through force or by negotiated settlement, where do transnational terrorists go? As I have outlined in *Foreign Policy* and *The Atlantic*, I see several possibilities.[13]

The "hardcore fighters" will likely remain in Iraq and Syria and look to join whatever the next iteration of the devolving group may be. In all likelihood, ISIS remnants in Iraq and Syria will hide, rest, rearm, and recuperate, going underground to reorganize before returning to wage the next phase of the insurgency.[14] In the interim, ISIS could transform into a clandestine terrorist organization, retaining the ability to conduct sporadic raids, ambushes, and possibly spectacular suicide attacks, both in the region and abroad.[15]

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[10] R. Kim Cragin, "Early History of Al-Qa'ida," *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 51, No. 4, 2008, pp. 1047–1067.

[11] The Soufan Group, "Foreign Fighters: An Updated Assessment of the Flow of Foreign Fighters Into Syria and Iraq," December 8, 2015.

[12] David Malet, *Foreign Fighters: Transnational Identity in Civil Conflicts*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.

[13] Brian Michael Jenkins and Colin P. Clarke, "In the Event of the Islamic State's Untimely Demise," *Foreign Policy*, May 11, 2016; see also Colin P. Clarke and Amarnath Amarasingam, "Where Do ISIS Fighters Go When the Caliphate Falls?" *The Atlantic*, March 6, 2017.

[14] Colin P. Clarke and Craig Whiteside, "Charting the Future of the Modern Caliphate," *War on the Rocks*, May 3, 2017.

[15] Daniel Milton and Muhammad al-'Ubaydi, *The Fight Goes On: The Islamic State's Continuing Military Efforts in Liberated Cities,* Combating Terrorism Center (CTC) at West Point, June 2017. It is also worth noting that, while

During this time, militants may switch allegiances among the hodgepodge of groups on the ground, including ISIS, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham,[16] and Ahrar al-Sham (which is already a loose coalition of Islamist and Salafist units), and will actively seek out ungoverned areas still outside of the writ of either Syrian or Iraqi government forces and their allies. As terrorism expert Bruce Hoffman has suggested, if the fortunes of ISIS continue to decline, some jihadists may see rapprochement with al-Qaida as the only option to continue the struggle.[17] Another factor leading to a marriage of convenience between former comrades could be the death of ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, leading to a new phase in the global jihad.[18]

A second group of fighters are the potential "free-agents or mercenaries," who will travel abroad to take part in the next jihadist theater, whether it be in Yemen, Libya, the Caucasus, West Africa, or Afghanistan. ISIS affiliates and local Sunni jihadists would likely welcome an influx of battle-hardened fighters. These fighters are the militant progeny of the original *mujahideen*, the transnational jihadists that once filled the ranks of al-Qaida and fought in Afghanistan, Chechnya, and the Balkans. Some fighters who are prevented from returning to their home countries can be expected to form a cohort of stateless jihadists who deliberately seek out weakly governed conflict zones in unstable regions.[19] Worldwide attention has made such travel more difficult than for prior generations of extremists, but some will no doubt escape detection.

When terrorism scholar Amarnath Amarasingam interviewed a Western ISIS fighter in late 2016, he emphasized the global reach of ISIS, saying the caliphate "has reached Afghanistan, Libya, West Africa, Algeria, Yemen, and many, many of its soldiers are in the lands of the [unbelievers]" (the West).[20] As ISIS loses territory in Iraq and Syria, some fighters may indeed try to reach these other theaters of jihad to protect, sustain, and expand the boundaries of the so-called caliphate. In other words, they see other potential options.

A third group of foreign fighters—the "returnees"—has occupied much time and energy in policy and law enforcement circles.[21] These fighters may attempt to return to their countries of origin, whether in the region to Tunisia and Saudi Arabia, or further afield to Europe, Asia, and North America. States with more robust national screening mechanisms, law enforcement, and

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ISIS will still pose a threat as a clandestine terrorist organization, the trajectory is moving in the right direction, as the organization is sequentially downgraded from a caliphate to an insurgency to a terrorist group.

[16] Hayat Tahrir al-Sham is the rebranded Jabhat Fateh al-Sham, which itself was the rebranded al-Qa'ida affiliate Jabhat al-Nusra. Hayat Tahrir al-Sham has disavowed a formal connection with al-Qa'ida, but the true relationship between the groups is a matter of skepticism and debate.

[17] Bruce Hoffman, "Al-Qaeda: Quietly and Patiently Rebuilding," *The Cipher Brief*, December 30, 2016.

[18] Colin P. Clarke, "Is ISIS Leader Baghdadi Still Alive?" *Foreign Affairs*, June 22, 2017; see also, Colin P. Clarke, "Can the Islamic State Survive if Baghdadi is Dead?" *Foreign Policy*, June 30, 2017.

[19] David Malet, "Foreign Fighter Mobilization and Persistence in a Global Context," *Terrorism and Political Violence,* Vol. 27, No. 3, 2015, pp.454-473.

[20] Lorne L. Dawson and Amarnath Amarasingam, "Talking to Foreign Fighters: Insights Into the Motivation for *Hijrah* to Syria and Iraq," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism,* Vol. 40, No. 3, 2017, pp. 191–210.

[21] R. Kim Cragin has argued that, contrary to popular belief, most foreign fighters do not die on battlefields or travel from conflict to conflict, but return home. See R. Kim Cragin, "The Challenge of Foreign Fighter Returnees," *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, 2017.

intelligence structures stand a better chance of stopping the fighters at their border, blunting the impact of these returnees. But not all Western security services are created equal, and further complicating the issue is the inability to even agree on the definition of who constitutes a foreign fighter in the first place.[22]

This third group is not as homogenous as it may seem. Just as foreign fighters who traveled to Syria and Iraq left for different reasons and fought with different groups, those that return will do so for varying reasons as well.

The first subgroup of returnees might be labeled the "disillusioned." These individuals went to Syria looking for utopia, adventure, and a pure expression of religious identity,[23] but they found something far different. Local Syrians did not respect them. They struggled with food, financing, and the tribulations of war. Upon returning to the West, these individuals could mentor other radicalized youth. These fighters may require psychological treatment in addition to prison time.

The second subgroup is the "disengaged but not disillusioned." Just as there are many reasons why militants go to fight, there are many reasons why they leave a conflict—marriage, battle fatigue, desire to be with family.[24] These militants, however, are still committed to jihadism. Accordingly, individuals might grow disillusioned with ISIS as an organization, but not with jihad as a whole.

The final subgroup is called the "operational" returnees. These are returning fighters who attempt to resuscitate dormant or create new networks, recruit members, or conduct homegrown-style attacks. They are likely to be pre-positioned and likely to attempt an attack under the command and control of ISIS remnants in the Middle East.[25] These individuals are the most dangerous and deadly.[26] The November 2015 Paris attacks are perhaps the clearest example; they were conducted by foreign fighters, who were trained in Syria and dispatched to France.[27] Operational returnees are of even more concern if one believes that hundreds of operatives have

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[22] Alastair Reed and Johanna Pohl, "Disentangling the EU Foreign Fighter Threat: The Case for a Comprehensive Approach," *RUSI*, February 10, 2017.

[23] Simon Cottee, "Pilgrims to the Islamic State," *The Atlantic*, July 24, 2015.

[24] Jessica Stern and J.M. Berger, "ISIS and the Foreign Fighter Phenomenon," *The Atlantic,* March 8, 2015.

[25] See Rukmini Callimachi, "Not 'Lone Wolves' After All: How ISIS Guides World's Terror Plots from Afar," *New York Times,* February 4, 2017; see also Daveed Gartenstein-Ross and Madeline Blackman, "ISIL's Virtual Planners: A Critical Terrorist Innovation," *War on the Rocks,* January 4, 2017; and Alexander Meleagrou-Hitchens and Seamus Hughes, "The Threat to the United States From the Islamic State's Virtual Entrepreneurs," *CTC Sentinel,* Vol. 10, No. 3, March 2017, pp.1–8.

[26] Thomas Hegghammer, "Should I Stay Or Should I Go? Explaining Variation in Western Jihadists' Choice between Domestic and Foreign Fighting," *American Political Science Review*, Vol.107, No. 1, February 2013, pp. 1–15.

[27] R. Kim Cragin, "The November 2015 Paris Attacks: The Impact of Foreign Fighter Returnees," *Orbis,* Vol. 61, No. 2, 2017, pp. 212–226.

already been deployed to Europe, with hundreds more hiding out on Europe's doorstep in Turkey.[28]

The West must develop a range of strategies to handle the threat posed by these different groups. The "hardcore fighters" who remain in Iraq and Syria will need to be killed or captured by Iraqi Security Forces and the anti-ISIS coalition. The first priority should be detection, which goes hand in hand with increased information sharing and training partner nations to screen and investigate capacity potential terrorists. This suggests an even greater role for multilateral cooperation.

Another major hurdle will be marshaling the resources necessary to monitor, track, and surveil dozens of battle-hardened jihadists attempting to blend back into Western society. Combating the threat posed by the "free agents" or roving band of militants calls for continued efforts by the West to build the partner capacity of host-nation forces in weak and fragile states.

What Is The Threat to the Homeland and What Should the U.S. Do To Mitigate the Threat?

It is critical to have a judicious discussion about the threat posed to the U.S. homeland while avoiding arguments that present the issue as binary. In other words, defining the threat as either completely overwhelming or relatively nonexistent is myopic at best and counterproductive at worst. The threat to the West posed by returning foreign fighters is anything but monolithic.

It is prudent to discuss the longer-term consequences to the homeland of the unraveling so-called caliphate in Iraq and Syria. In the long term, military gains against ISIS are a necessary step in ultimately defeating it. But in the shorter term, its dissolution will create uncertainty, rising threats, opportunities for extremists, and new challenges for our military, intelligence, and law enforcement communities. I am comforted in knowing that much effort has been focused on this threat since the summer of 2014—testimonies by the FBI, the Central Intelligence Agency, the Director of National Intelligence, and others have reinforced that the United States has taken the threat seriously and been a leader in international cooperation to combat these foreign fighters. And despite the high casualties inflicted on fighters who went to Iraq and Syria, their sheer numbers means that the threat will be with us for years to come.

The threat is far more serious for Europe and the Middle East than for the United States. The same factors that make Europe so vulnerable to the threat posed by foreign fighters—geography; the number of citizens who traveled to Iraq or Syria; counterterrorism capabilities, including screening, watchlisting, and whole-of-government programs; poor continent-wide information-sharing and intelligence and law-enforcement coordination; and the relationship between Muslim communities and host-nation governments—present favorably for the United States. As director of the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), Nicholas Rasmussen acknowledged in Congressional testimony that compared to European counterparts, U.S. ports of entry are under

[28] Rukmini Callimachi, "How a Secretive Branch of ISIS Built a Global Network of Killers," *New York Times,* August 3, 2016; see also Bruce Hoffman, "The Global Terror Threat and Counterterrorism Challenges Facing the Next Administration," *CTC Sentinel,* Vol. 9, No. 11, November/December 2016.

far less strain from migration and U.S. law enforcement agencies are not nearly as overtaxed by the sheer numbers of terrorist plots and potential suspects.[29]

Since the attacks of September 11, 2001, 95 Americans have died in jihadist-related attacks in the homeland, with 63 of those deaths coming from just two attacks—San Bernardino and Orlando. According to a recent report on radicalization and jihadist attacks in the West, of the 17 successful attacks linked to jihadist terrorists in the United States between June 2014 and June 2017, *none* were perpetrated by foreign fighters.[30] But Americans have gone to Syria and returned to the United States. A U.S. citizen from Florida, Moner Mohammad Abu-Salha, traveled to Syria to fight with al-Qa'ida's affiliate organization and returned to the United States without U.S. officials realizing that he had trained with a terrorist group, proving that government and intelligence authorities are not omniscient.

Terrorists traveling to the United States from abroad to conduct attacks are still rare events. While 9/11 was undoubtedly a high-impact event, without question, it remains an anomaly. Moreover, since then, the United States has gone to great lengths to defend the homeland. The United States has worked with the screening community to develop a comprehensive, end-to-end vetting system that is part of a robust system of measures, including face-to-face interviews and biometric assessments, intended to serve as a line of defense against foreign fighters seeking to infiltrate the country.[31]

Even with these measures, the threat has atomized; in the United States, violence perpetrated by homegrown violent extremists (HVEs) remains perhaps our foremost concern. The FBI has investigations on approximately 1,000 potential HVEs across all 50 states. As ISIS continues to lose territory, it will likely seek to emphasize high-profile attacks to remain relevant and demonstrate virility in the face of severe adversity. This could result in an uptick in lone-wolf attacks in the West, including in the United States. Put simply, what happens in Raqqa matters in Rochester.

Comparing the current threat level in the United States to the immediate aftermath of 9/11, Rasmussen observed,

> The threat landscape is less predictable and, while the scale of capabilities currently demonstrated by most of the violent extremist actors does not rise to the level that core al-Qa'ida had on 9/11, it is fair to say that we face more threats originating in more places and involving more individuals than we have at any time in the past 15 years.[32]

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[29] Nicholas J. Rasmussen, "Fifteen Years After 9/11: Threats to the Homeland," Statement for the Record: Hearing Before the Senate Homeland Security Governmental Affairs Committee, September 27, 2016.

[30] Lorenzo Vidino, Francesco Marone, and Eva Entenmann, *Fear Thy Neighbor: Radicalization and Jihadist Attacks in the West,* Institute for International Political Studies, June 2017.

[31] For more on specific programs and databases, including the Terrorist Identities Datamart Environment, the Transportation Security Administration's Automated Targeting System, and the Electronic System for Travel Authorization, see Brian Michael Jenkins, "There Will Be Battles in the Heart of Your Abode: The Threat Posed by Foreign Fighters Returning from Syria and Iraq," testimony presented before the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee on March 12, 2015.

[32] Rasmussen, 2016.

Accordingly, the United States must continue to allocate sufficient resources to preventing foreign terrorist fighters from attempting to sneak into the country. This includes not only a stout defense of American borders, but also intelligence sharing with allies overseas, including European countries, Turkey, and other nations throughout the Middle East, Africa, and Asia.

And while we must continue to prevent foreign terrorist fighters from attempting to return to the United States, we must also focus on the more likely threat posed by radicalization and homegrown violent extremism. Countering violent extremism has proceeded in fits and starts in the West, including in the United States. We have too little data to understand which programs work well and which do not—continued federal support for ongoing and future research will be critical to making progress in this area, as will oversight, monitoring, evaluation, and assessment to discern which programs work and why.[33]

We still understand very little about the radicalization process, what role the Internet and social media play in this process, and what policy should be when it comes to monitoring terrorist use of social media (e.g., is it more prudent to shut communication channels down or leave them up to monitor and map terrorist networks?) Congress might consider funding more fusion cells and allocating resources for law enforcement training to deal with the threat from returning foreign fighters. This could extend to funding for the recruitment of linguists and cultural experts working in tandem with Customs and Border Patrol and Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Conclusion

We are entering yet another period of uncertainty. With the dissolution of the geographic entity known as the ISIS caliphate, new threats and challenges will arise. Hearings such as this and many others of its kind underscore how seriously the United States takes these challenges. The threat of terrorism can sometimes feel ubiquitous, especially as "the post-9/11 media has profoundly changed how Americans assess the risk of terrorism."[34] It is important to keep a sober perspective.

In their 2015 study, "Assessing the Islamic State's Commitment to Attacking the West," Hegghammer and Petter Nesser conclude that "the Islamic State does not currently pose the same type of terrorist threat to the West as al-Qaida did in the 2000s."[35] I would extrapolate on this to argue that this statement may be true for the United States, but perhaps no longer true for Europe. But even within the United States, there are risks that may not stem from the terrorist diaspora.

[33] An especially promising study is Todd Helmus, Miriam Matthews, Rajeev Ramchand, Sina Beaghley, David Stebbins, Amanda Kadlec, Michael A. Brown, Aaron Kofner, and Joie D. Acosta, *RAND Program Evaluation Toolkit for Countering Violent Extremism*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, TL-243-DHS, 201.

[34] Daniel Byman and Will McCants, "Fight of Flight: How to Avoid a Forever War Against Jihadists," *Washington Quarterly*, No. 40, No. 2, 2017, pp.67–77.

[35] Thomas Hegghammer and Petter Nesser, "Assessing the Islamic State's Commitment to Attacking the West," *Perspectives on Terrorism*, Vol. 9, No. 4, 2015.

And while we focus on these new challenges posed by the unraveling of ISIS, let us not forget that our principal terrorist adversary over the past 20 years—al-Qa'ida (or at least some form of it), is still with us, as evidenced by al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula's increasing obsession with attacking commercial aviation; this group will remain a direct threat to the United States.

With each brutal battle in Iraq and Syria, the potential pool of foreign fighters is shrinking. ISIS fighters are dying in shocking numbers—nearly 60,000 have died since June 2014.[36] The 300 that until recently were hunkered down in Mosul showed no proclivity to surrender or escape; they launched counteroffensives against Iraqi forces, including waves of suicide attackers. Those that survive these major battles will keep defending the caliphate until the bitter end, either in Mayadeen or in whatever disparate outposts of the Sunni Arab hinterlands remain available.

In short, I agree with the assessment of Georgetown University professor Daniel Byman, who, in testimony last month to the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, concluded the danger posed by ISIS to the U.S. homeland is "real but manageable."[37] With 150 American foreign fighters, scores of whom are presumably dead, it may be possible to assign regular surveillance to each of these individuals in case they do attempt to return home.

Yet even as the United States faces less of a threat than our European allies, we cannot become complacent and must ensure continued vigilance. Toward this end, I heed recent remarks offered by Lt. Gen. Michael K. Nagata, one of the Army's top special operations forces officers, that with respect to ISIS, "we have to conclude that we do not fully appreciate the scale or strength of this phenomenon."[38]

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[36] Ben Hubbard and Eric Schmitt, "ISIS, Despite Heavy Losses, Still Inspires Global Attacks," *New York Times,* July 8, 2017.

[37] Daniel Byman, "Beyond Iraq and Syria: ISIS' Ability to Conduct Attacks Abroad," testimony for the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, June 8, 2017.

[38] Hubbard and Schmitt, 2017.